

Message Text

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ORIGIN DHA-02

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EA-06 EUR-08 DPW-01 H-01 INR-05

PM-03 PRS-01 SP-02 NSC-05 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

IO-03 /052 R

DRAFTED BY D/HA:FASIEVERTS/FMLC

APPROVED BY EA:RHMILLER

EA/VLC:JDROSENTHAL

EA/ANP:CSQUIRE

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P R 212232Z JUL 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA ROUTINE

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

CINCPAC

JCRC NAS BARBERS POINT HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 180776

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MOPS, VN, US, AS

SUBJECT: FRAGMENTARY REPORT THROUGH AUSTRALIAN EMBOFF
THAT "AMERICAN PILOT" RECENTLY ESCAPED FROM JAIL IN HANOI

REF: A) VIENTIANE 1737; B) BANGKOK 20539 (NOTAL)

1. WE SHARE EMBASSY VIENTIANE'S VIEW THAT REF A) REPORT
SEEMS INHERENTLY IMPLAUSIBLE. AT SAME TIME WE BELIEVE
REPORT MUST BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY AND INVESTIGATED TO THE
FULLEST POSSIBLE EXTENT.

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2. ONE POSSIBILITY THAT SUGGESTS ITSELF IS THAT THE

REPORT REFERS TO U.S. PRISONERS WHO HAVE BEEN MOVED TO HANOI FROM SVN. WE KNOW OF TWO U.S. PRISONERS CAPTURED AND/OR DETAINED IN THE SOUTH AT THE TIME OF THE U.S. EVACUATION OR SHORTLY THEREAFTER, ARLO GAY AND TUCKER GOUGELMANN, NEITHER OF WHOM HAS BEEN HEARD OF IN MANY MONTHS BY THE ICRC OR OTHER POSSIBLE INTERMEDIARIES. WE RECALL THAT THE 14 U.S. AND OTHER THIRD COUNTRY PERSONNEL CAPTURED IN MARCH 1976 AT BAN ME THUOT, SVN WERE SOON THEREAFTER MOVED TO NVN AND SUBSEQUENTLY RELEASED IN HANOI WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF UNHCR REPRESENTATIVES.

3. IN THIS REGARD, WE NOTE FROM REF B) THAT THE ICRC REP

IN SAIGON SAYS THERE ARE "STRONG INDICATIONS" THAT ARLO GAY HAS BEEN TAKEN TO NVN. GAY IS A U.S. CITIZEN MERCHANT SEAMAN/FISHERMAN LONG RESIDENT IN SVN WHO WAS CAPTURED ON A SOUTHERN COASTAL ISLAND WHILE TRYING TO FLEE VIETNAM AROUND APRIL 30, 1975. ALTHOUGH HE IS NOT A "PILOT," WE HAVE NOTED BEFORE A TENDENCY OF DRV REPS TO REFER TO ALL U.S. PRISONERS AS "PILOTS".

4. APPEARS TO US THAT FIRST STEP TO TAKE WOULD BE TO TRY TO EXPLORE FURTHER THE NATURE OF DEVEREAU'S SOURCE AND HOW THIS INFO CAME TO BE PASSED TO HIM IN SUCH A FORTUITOUS WAY. WE SUGGEST THAT EMBASSY CANBERRA CONTACT MFA TO TRY TO ARRANGE CONTACT WITH DEVEREAU AND TO GLEAN WHATEVER FURTHER INFO AUSTRALIANS MAY HAVE ON THIS SUBJECT.

5. WE WOULD BE GLAD TO HAVE BRITISH AS WELL AS AUSTRALIAN EMBASSIES IN HANOI ASKED TO FOLLOW UP ON THIS SUBJECT AS WELL. SUGGEST THESE REQUESTS BE INITIATED IN VIENTIANE. ROBINSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, POW
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE180776
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: FASIEVERTS/FMLC
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760281-0931
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760735/aaaabejl.tel
Line Count: 93
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN DHA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 76 VIENTIANE 1737, 76 BANGKOK 20539
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 SEP 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: WITHDRAWN <21 MAY 2004 by ifshinsr, 3.4.X1, 3.4.X6>; APPROVED <15 SEP 2004 by BoyleJA>; RELEASED <15 SEP 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <16 SEP 2004 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FRAGMENTARY REPORT THROUGH AUSTRALIAN EMBOFF THAT "AMERICAN PILOT" RECENTLY ESCAPED FROM JAIL IN HANOI
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Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006